

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0892

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV PDIP UNGA MP US

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM'S REQUEST TO MEET
WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DURING UNGA

REF: STATE 200289

1. UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MEETING IN NEW YORK WOULD BE EASIER TO ARRANGE THAN APPOINTMENT IN WASHINGTON, BUT EXPLANATION THAT MEETING IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE PRESIDENT WILL NOT BE IN NEW YORK WILL NOT BE EASY FOR RAMGOOLAM TO ACCEPT, SINCE HE HAS OFFERED TO TRAVEL TO WASHINGTON AT ANY TIME FOR SUCH MEETING. RAMGOOLAM APPRECIATES THAT AMERICAN PRESIDENT HAS AN EXTREMELY FULL SCHEDULE, BUT SINCE HE REGULARLY MEETS WITH GISCARD D'ESTAING AND CALLAGHAN WHENEVER HE IS IN PARIS AND LONDON (AND WILL DOUBTLESS MEET WITH BREZHNEV WHEN HE GOES TO MOSCOW IN NOVEMBER) IT WILL NOT SIT WELL WITH HIM THAT HE CANNOT MEET WITH LEADER OF U.S., COUNTRY WITH WHICH HE WISHES TO MAINTAIN CLOSE TIES.

2. A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD DO MORE TO CEMENT OUR GOOD RELATIONS WITH RAMGOOLAM AND HIS GOVERNMENT THAN ANYTHING ELSE I CAN THINK OF AT THIS JUNCTURE. IT IS NOT THAT RAMGOOLAM HAS MATTERS OF
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GREAT SUBSTANCE TO DISCUSS WITH THE PRESIDENT, AS THERE ARE CURRENTLY NO MAJOR PROBLEMS IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS (EVEN DIEGO GARCIA IS LESS OF AN ISSUE SINCE THE US-USSR TALKS ON MILITARY RESTRAINT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WERE LAUNCHED). IT IS RATHER THAT RAMGOOLAM TENDS TO PERSONALIZE HIS GOVERNMENT'S AND COUNTRY'S FOREIGN RELATIONS, AS BEING HIS PERSONAL RELATIONS

WITH THIS OR THAT LEADER, WHETHER HE BE EUROPEAN, AFRICAN, ASIAN OR AMERICAN. THIS IS PERHAPS UNDERSTANDABLE FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN A NATIONAL POLITICAL LEADER SINCE THE 1940'S AND WHO HAS PERSONALLY KNOWN A GREAT MANY OF THE WORLD'S MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES OF THE PERIOD SINCE WORLD WAR II. WHILE HE IS A MAN OF RESTRAINED EGO, AND FULLY REALIZES THE LIMITED INFLUENCE OF HIS SMALL COUNTRY ON THE AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD, HE WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO MAKE THE ACQUAINTANCE, HOWEVER BRIEFLY, OF THE LEADER OF THE SUPER-POWER FOR WHICH HE FEELS THE GREATEST AFFINITY.

3. A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AT THIS TIME WOULD HELP BOLSTER RAMGOOLAM'S POSITION DOMESTICALLY AND WOULD ASSIST IN REESTABLISHING HIS CONFIDENCE THAT HIS WESTERN FRIENDS DO NOT INTEND TO "ABANDON" MAURITIUS. HIS CONFIDENCE WAS SOMEWHAT SHAKEN BY THE RECENT COUP IN THE SEYCHELLES, AND THE SEEMING ALARCITY WITH WHICH THE UK, FRANCE AND THE U.S. "EMBRACED" ALBERT RENE AND "ABANDONED" THEIR FRIEND MANCHAM. HE HAS PUBLICLY VOICED HIS CHAGRIN OVER THIS, AND HAS OPENLY EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN THAT THE WEST WOULD JUST AS SPEEDILY "DROP" MAURITIUS. RAMGOOLAM IS EQUALLY CONVINCED THAT THE SOVIETS ARE WORKING TO SUBVERT HIS THOROUGHLY DEMOCRATIC REGIME IN ORDER TO INSTALL THE MARXIST-ORIENTED OPPOSITION PARTY IN POWER. SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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REASSURING WORDS FROM PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD HELP RESTORE HIS MORALE AND HIS WILL TO CARRY ON AS BEFORE AS A FIRM FRIEND OF THE WEST.

4. THERE ARE SOME OTHER REASONS WHICH WOULD ARGUE IN FAVOR OF GRANTING RAMGOOLAM'S REQUEST:

(A) HAVING THE PRESIDENT MEET WITH THE LEADER OF A SMALL AND DISTANT COUNTRY WOULD SIGNAL THAT THE USG CARES ABOUT ITS RELATIONS WITH ALL COUNTRIES, REGARDLESS OF SIZE OR IMPORTANCE;

(B) OUR FRIENDS IN THE THIRD WORLD, LIKE RAMGOOLAM, SHOULD FEEL THAT THEY GET AT LEAST AS MUCH ATTENTION AS THOSE WHO ARE NOT NORMALLY SO COOPERATIVE;

(C) THOUGH RAMGOOLAM NO LONGER IS CHAIRMAN OF THE OAU, HIS COUNTRY DOES OCCUPY A SEAT ON THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL, AND RAMGOOLAM PERSONALLY CARRIES SOME WEIGHT IN THE COMMONWEALTH AND SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL.

(D) MAURITIUS HAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD HUMAN RIGHTS

RECORD FOR A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY, AND A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT COULD BE DEEMED ENCOURAGEMENT OR PRAISE OF THIS PERFORMANCE.

5. IF A PRESIDENTIAL MEETING IS NOT POSSIBLE, A MEETING IN NEW YORK WITH SECRETARY VANCE WOULD DEFINITELY BE USEFUL; IN FACT IT WOULD SEEM TO ME ALMOST A NECESSITY IN ORDER TO ASSUAGE RAMGOOLAM'S FEELINGS ABOUT NOT BEING ABLE TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT.

6. I SHOULD ADD THAT IF RAMGOOLAM IS TURNED DOWN THIS TIME, HE WILL BE BACK AT US AGAIN NEXT YEAR, AND IN THE MEANTIME WE'LL BE LIVING WITH AN UNHAPPY PRIME MINISTER FOR A YEAR.
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